

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 ACDA-07 /054 W
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R 291500Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5958
INFO CHUSMTM DHAHRAN
SECDEF WASHDC
CINCEUR

S E C R E T JIDDA 6462

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SA, US
SUBJECT: MINISTER OF DEFENSE REQUESTS SURVEY OF SAUDI
COASTAL DEFENSES.

SUMMARY:

MINDEF PRINCE SULTAN HAS SENT US AN URGENT REQUEST FOR A
SURVEY OF SAUDI COASTAL DEFENSES WITH THE AIM OF IMPROVING THEM TO
THE
EXTENT POSSIBLE THROUGH UTILIZING EXISTING FORCES. HIS REQUEST
APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PROMPTED BY A FRENCH PROPOSAL THAT
THE SAG CREATE A NEW FORCE TO BE EQUIPPED WITH AMONG OTHER
MATERIEL, THE EXOCET MISSILE. WE INTEND TO PROBE FURTHER
WHAT PRINCE SULTAN HAS IN MIND BUT ON THE BASIS OF WHAT WE NOW KNOW
WE RECOMMEND THAT THE REQUEST BE CONSIDERED FAVORABLY.
SAUDI COASTAL DEFENSES CAN STAND IMPROVEMENT AND THE
SAG SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO DO THE JOB BUT RPT BUT WITH
PRESENT AND PROJECTED MANPOWER AND MATERIAEL.

END SUMMARY

1. THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING LETTER DATED SEPT 20
FROM SAUDI MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION PRINCE SULTAN BIN
ABD AL AZIZ REQUESTING THE USG TO UNDERTAKE A SURVEY OF
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SAUDI COASTAL DEFENSES.

BEGIN TEXT: MOST SECRET AND URGENT.

I WISH TO INFORM YOUR EXCELLENCY THAT OUR SEA COASTS ARE IN NEED OF STRENGTHENING TO DEFEND OUR REGIONAL WATERS, OUR NATIONAL, ECONOMIC AND OUR MORALE INTERESTS. SINCE OUR GOVERNMENT HAS A FIRM WILL TO INSTALL A COSTAL DEFENSE SYSTEM ON BOTH THE EAST AND WEST COASTS OF THE KINGDOM, WE HOPE TO CONTACT YOUR GOVERNMENT TO EITHER UNDERTAKE A FULL, COMPLETE STUDY OF THIS PROJECT OR A REVIEW OF THE SNEP PROGRAM TO DEVELOP COASTAL DEFENSE IN SUCH A WAY THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO OVERLAPPING EFFORTS OR DUPLICATION OF EQUIPMENT. YOU SHOULD TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION ASPECTS OF MANPOWER, ECONOMY, AND THE TYPE AND EFFICIENCY OF ARMED UNITS, AND ALSO THE EXTENT OF THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THIS SYSTEM AND EXISTING PROJECTS IN THE ARMY, NAVY, AND AIR FORCE.

IF YOU DECIDE TO TAKE UP THIS STUDY, I WOULD ASK YOU TO SEND A SPECIAL TEAM TO STUDY OUR NEEDS, PARTICULARLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR OWN EXPERTS, WITH THE PROVISIO THAT THIS BE UNDERTAKEN SPEEDILY BECAUSE OF ITS IMPORTANCE.

2. CHUSMTM BG AHMANN BELIEVES THAT THE SAUDI SYSTEM OF COASTAL DEFENSE COULD CERTAINLY STAND IMPROVEMENT AND IS ALSO OF THE OPINION (WITH WHICH WE AGREE) THAT IMPROVEMENT IN THIS AREA SHOULD COME TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE FROM IMPROVED ORGANIZATION AND UTILIZATION OF EXISTING FORCES AND EQUIPMENT RATHER THAN THROUGH ATTEMPTING TO CREATE A NEW FORCE EQUIPED WITH NEW TYPES OF WEAPONS.

3. IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT PRINCE SULTAN HAS IN MIND, CHUSMTM HAS INFORMALLY DISCUSSED IT WITH MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OFFICERS. HE WAS INFORMED BY A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT THE FRENCH HAD COME TO THE SAUDIS WITH A PROPOSAL ESSENTIALLY TO CREATE A NEW SAUDI ARMED FORCE EQUIPPED, INTER ALIA, WITH EXOCET (ANTI-SHIP) MISSILES FOR DEFENDING THE SAUDI COASTS. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE OF THIS INFORMATION THE SAUDI MILITARY WAS NOT OVERLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE UNSOLICITED FRENCH PROPOSAL BECAUSE: A) THEY ARE SECRET

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AWARE THAT THEY CAN ILL AFFORD THE ADDITIONAL MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS; B) THE FRENCH PROPOSAL GAVE NO PRIORITY TO DEFENDING KEY AREAS BUT INSTEAD TALKED OF DEFENDING THE TOTAL COAST, WHICH THE SAUDI MILITARY CONSIDERS UNWORKABLE (AS DOES GEN AHMANN); AND C) THE FRENCH PROPOSAL DID NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT PRESENT AND PROJECTED CAPABILITIES OF THE SAUDI ARMY, NAVY, AND AIR FORCE. ACCORDINGLY THE SAUDI MILITARY SUGGESTED TO PRINCE SULTAN THAT HE REQUEST A US TEAM TO

PROVIDE A BALANCED AND WORKABLE PROPOSAL.

4. CHUSMTM IS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH PRINCE SULTAN ABOUT OCT 4. UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTS US TO THE CONTRARY WE INTEND TO AUTHORIZE GEN AHMANN TO RAISE THE MATTER WITH PRINCE SULTAN AT THAT TIME. HE WILL DO SO IN THE CONTEXT OF OBTAINING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO SUPPLEMENT PRINCE SULTAN'S WRITTEN REQUEST AND WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE USG WILL UNDERTAKE THE SURVEY.

5. OUR PRELIMINARY JUDGMENT IS THAT THE USG SHOULD AGREE TO DO THE SURVEY FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS: A) THE SAG HAS A LEGITIMATE CONCERN ABOUT THE DEFENSE OF ITS EXTENSIVE COASTS. B) THE ASSISTANCE WE HAVE ALREADY OR ARE SCHEDULED TO PROVIDE WILL GIVE THE SAG THE CAPACITY GREATLY TO IMPROVE ITS COASTAL DEFENSES; C) MANPOWER LIMITATIONS ARE CRITICAL (AS PRINCE SULTAN IMPLICITLY RECOGNIZES IN HIS REQUEST.) ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE SAUDI COASTAL DEFENSES ALONG THE LINES APPARENTLY SUGGESTED BY THE FRENCH COULD HAVE A SERIOUSLY DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE PROGRAMS WE ARE CURRENTLY HELPING THE SAUDIS WITH. THIS IS NOT A CASE OF "IF WE DON'T SELL, SOMEONE ELSE WILL". IT IS RATHER A CASE WHEN THROUGH OUR EFFORTS AND ADVISE WE MAY BE ABLE TO KEEP THE SAUDIS FROM SPENDING AT ALL, OR AT LEAST IN APPRECIABLE AMOUNTS.

6. THEREFORE, IN RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF PRINCE SULTAN'S REQUEST WE DO SO ENVISAGING A SURVEY TEAM WHICH WILL HELP THE SAUDIS BETTER USE WHAT THEY HAVE OR ARE SCHEDULED TO GET. THE TEAM SHOULD HAVE A NARROWLY CIRCUMSCRIBED FRAME OF REFERENCE.

7. THE DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE THE URGENCY OF PRINCE SULTAN'S REQUEST. THIS IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR HIM. HOWEVER, IF AS SEEMS
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POSSIBLE HE IS BEING IMPORTUNED BY THE FRENCH
FOR A REPLY TO A PATENTLY BAD PROPOSITION, WE RECOMMEND THAT
HIS REQUEST FOR A RAPID RESPONSE BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE.
HORAN

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